

escaped from their confinement and fell in rich luxuriance about her face and shoulders, made her wanness more striking. She seated herself on a mound by the margin of the brook, and opening a volume which she carried in her hand, bent her eyes upon the page: Minutes passed, her eye rested there, but the page was still unturned, and the lady's reverie still unbroken. Now was waged in Henry's mind, the fierce conflict between duty and inclination. As he gazed on Gabrielle, so young, so fair, and yet with the marks of deep grief in every lineament; the generous and noble impulse struggled hard for the mastery of his soul; should he strive to mingle with the bitterness of sorrow, the sting of remorse? For a few moments, the contest seemed doubtful, but the impulse was vanquished, it could not stand the test of temptation. He cheated himself with the belief that only this once, would he seek her presence, that he had not infringed, and would not, the spirit of his vow. Easier is it to close the ear to the Syren's spell, than to flee from it.

He advanced from his concealment, and stood beside the lady. Absorbed in her own thoughts, she did not perceive him, till Henry, in gentle tones, inquired if he were indeed so unfortunate as to be entirely forgotten by the Lady Gabrielle. At the sound of that unexpected, but well remembered voice, Gabrielle shrieked, and would have fallen had not Henry caught her. That the object of her thoughts should stand before her, as though he had sprung from the ground, was too great and joyful a surprise for her drooping frame, and for a few moments she remained insensible. When she unclosed her eyes, and beheld Henry kneeling by her side, and chafing her temples, she pressed her hand upon her eyes, as if to convince herself of being really awake—that this was no vision. With the conviction of its reality, a burning blush spread over her pale cheek. In tones of pleading earnestness, Henry begged forgiveness for having thus intruded upon her solitude.

"Chance acquainted me that you were in Mantes," said he, and he recounted to her his adventure on the first evening. "I knew that it must be an angel, or the Lady Gabrielle, that sang, and since then I have lingered here, in the almost vain hope of seeing you. Can you, will you, forgive me for thus presuming to enter your presence."

"It is never presumption" said Gabrielle, while the blush again overspread her cheek. "for the Count d'Albret to seek my presence, As my cousin's friend and my own, he is always welcome. But why does he seek me by stealth?"

That peculiar expression of mingled pride and

melancholy, which Gabrielle had so often before noticed, for an instant rested on Henry's face, as he answered:

"The soldier of fortune, whose possessions are yet to be won by his sword, and whose highest titles are honour and courage, is unwilling to intrude himself into the halls of the proud and titled."

"O speak not thus," said Gabrielle, with warmth, "the proudest halls were honoured by the presence of the Count d'Albret. Though I may not promise the sincere cordial welcome you once received, when—" she paused, and without concluding the sentence, continued: "But a courteous welcome from the Marchioness de Sourdis, I may surely promise."

Before the sentence was concluded, Gabrielle's voice trembled excessively; and the bright blush faded from her cheek; she knew that she had even now promised more than she dared hope. The Marchioness de Sourdis, her aunt on the maternal side, with whom she had resided since the death of the Lady Margaret, was a woman of strong intellect, imperious in her disposition, of boundless ambition, and insatiable avarice; Gabrielle knew it to be highly improbable that she would receive even courteously an almost nameless soldier, when the haughtiest in the land were her constant guests, and often her suppliants; for, though hated, her intriguing disposition made her also an object of terror. Gabrielle also knew that her aunt more than suspected her of being not altogether "fancy free." That this was the real reason for her indifference for Bellegarde, and her other suitors, among whom were the Duke de Lougueville, the Marchioness had bluntly accused her. Gabrielle trembled at the mere thought of what the consequences would be, were she exposed to her cool searching glance, when in the presence of the Count d'Albret. She knew that the Marchioness would instantly penetrate her secret, and that the result would be galling insults to her guest, fresh indignities and privations to herself. Henry observed her emotions, and perhaps guessed somewhat of the thoughts which were passing through her mind, for he answered:

"These cold courteous receptions suit not my taste. Pardon me that I say it, but I crave not the honour of entering the halls of the Marchioness de Sourdis. She is everything, and anything, but what the noble Lady Margaret was."

"You speak the truth," involuntarily exclaimed Gabrielle.

"Moreover," continued Henry, "there are other, and yet more weighty reasons, why I may not seek thee openly."